



# Lewis and Clark Behavioral Health Local Advisory

## Social Factors that May Affect your Health Survey Executive Summary

### **BACKGROUND:**

The mission of the Lewis and Clark County Behavioral Health Local Advisory Council (LAC) is to assist in the improvement of Lewis and Clark County public behavioral health services and to review and make recommendations about behavioral health services to the Lewis and Clark County Commission. Workgroup #1 of the LAC is focused specifically on understanding and improving the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of behavioral health services. Workgroup membership consists of representatives from PureView Health Center, Lewis and Clark County Criminal Justice Services Department, St. Peter's Health, Western Montana Mental Health Center, Lewis and Clark Public Health, and a council member representing a consumer or family member. In an effort to build a greater understanding of the determinants that contribute to high utilization of behavioral health services, LAC Workgroup #1, administered the Social Factors that May Affect your Health survey between June and August 2019.

After review of the initial results, the workgroup recommended administering an amended version of the survey to help gain a deeper understanding of challenges facing county residents experiencing behavioral health challenges. The second administration of the survey occurred between November 12 and December 31, 2019.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The questions for the survey were adopted from the social determinant questionnaire that PureView Health Center administers to every patient at the time of a clinic visit. Workgroup members adapted the questions to meet the purpose of the survey which was to understand the determinants that contribute to high utilization of behavioral health services in Lewis and Clark County. The questions were entered into Survey Monkey to ease the data entry and analysis burden. Three agencies agreed to administer the survey for the duration of three months. PureView Health Center administered the survey to patients who had been seen in the emergency room through follow-up phone calls by a nurse care manager. Staff of Western Montana Mental Health Center administered the survey to individuals admitted to Journey Home crisis stabilization facility. And staff from Lewis and Clark County Criminal Justice Services Department administered the survey to individuals in the Pre-Trial Services program. At the conclusion of the three months, workgroup members reviewed the results and provided a summary presentation at the General LAC meeting on October 1, 2019.

The edited version of the survey that was administered in November and December 2019, utilized a similar line of questioning as the first survey but also included texted boxes allowing for open-ended responses. The same three agencies agreed to give the survey. The only change was PureView filtered the list of emergency room visits down to just those associated with a behavioral health issue.



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### **RESULTS:**

There were 190 total responses to the Social Factors that May Affect your Health survey. 43 (24%) reported being unemployed. Of note, over 30% of survey respondents identified inability to access health care. Specifically, >34% indicated medical, almost 29% identified mental health, and >26% stated dental care were not accessible when needed. A concerning 45% said they are “very much” experiencing stress. Of those who indicated they had been diagnosed with a mental illness, 59% reported that diagnosis was given over a year ago. Over 46% had received some form of treatment for their mental illness in the last year. More than 71% had been prescribed medications for mental illness; yet, only 46% reported taking the medication as prescribed. There were several questions where the respondent answered “I choose not to answer this question” or “other,” but the survey did not provide a text box to allow for further explanation.

For the second, edited survey administered in Nov/Dec 2019, there were 17 responses. 47% reported being in unstable housing situations. 29% reporting being unemployed. Of those who reported being unemployed, 67% indicated that mental illness and substance were contributing factors. 63% of respondents stated lack of reliable transportation impacted their ability to seek medical care, work, and take care of day-to-day needs. Over 92% of respondents had received some level of treatment for their mental illness. Although 93% were able to access mental health services when needed, and 85% had received treatment within the year, over 85% also reported facing significant challenges managing their mental illness. 69% reported challenges with managing their substance abuse / addiction issues. Nearly 77% were able to access addictions services, the same percentage reported feeling these services were not effective.

Workgroup members identified these themes when analyzing the survey results:

- Effectiveness of both mental illness and substance abuse treatment
- Resistance to behavioral health treatment
- Housing and other social determinants significantly contribute to stress
- Lack of awareness of available resources

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Due to the survey format not offering opportunity for further explaining of several questions, the first recommendation is to edit the questions to remove the option not to answer the question and to add the option to explain when “other” is chosen. The survey will then be re-administer to fewer individuals from the same three agencies that administered the first survey. The duration of the survey will be 30 days compared to the original 90 days.

The second recommendation from the workgroup is to advocate for universal screening for depression, anxiety, suicide, and substance abuse. The LAC has recently added a new workgroup to promote universal screening practices in the primary care setting.

The third recommendation is to advocate for universal screening of social determinants, also in the primary care setting, as a tool to identify factors that may be present in an individual’s life that maybe impacting their ability to manage stress and/or mental illness.



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The fourth recommendation is to encourage primary care providers to adopt and use the CONNECT Referral System to link individuals to community support services if identified by either the behavioral health screener or the social determinant questionnaire.

Additional recommendations the workgroup members discussed after the second survey was conducted:

- Consider adding treatment options at Our Place Drop in Center.
- Collaborate with service providers to find innovative and creative ways to offer services that will better meet the needs of consumers, i.e. walk-in clinics.
- Request medical and social services use the social determinant questions to identify challenges that are impacting physical and behavioral health. Use CONNECT Referral System to link consumers to support services (consistent with recommendation three above).
- Integrate peer supports to assist with follow-up appointments and connecting to other needed supports.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The Social Factors that May Affect Your Health survey provided a great deal of information to LAC workgroup #1 and successfully resulted in a greater understanding of factors that contribute to high utilization of behavioral health services. Several tangible recommendations were made that will result in further action of LAC workgroups.

Due to several unanswered questions, workgroup members recommended editing the survey and re-administering with the hope of gaining more qualitative explanation of challenges and barriers individuals are experiencing when accessing and/or managing behavioral health.

A second survey was conducted which resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of factors contributing to high utilization of behavioral health services. An additional four recommendations were made for the LAC and service providers to consider in an effort to improve access, effectiveness, and quality of services in Lewis and Clark County.